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ENTERTAINMENT

Bodies talk, Sinatra sings

Twyla Tharp uses legs instead of words

BY LINDA WINER

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They sweep down the stairs into the sleek but cozy deco club with the virtuoso big-band orchestra. Some come in couples, some alone. They've all dressed up for something slinky and maybe something special to happen as they get tossed and flipped and changed by an evening of Frank Sinatra and Twyla Tharp.

And special it definitely is. "Come Fly Away," Tharp's dangerously gorgeous, wordless dance adventure, asks audiences to put aside the usual expectations of plot and to follow the delicious and foolish complexities of four relationships through exhilarating, scary-smart movement.

The show has even less story than did the director-choreographer's all-dance Billy Joel smash, "Movin' Out," which I regret on some nostalgic level. And yet, in slightly less than two breath-

WHAT "Come Fly Away"
WHERE Marquis Theatre,
 1535 Broadway
INFO \$66.50-\$126.50; 877-250-2929; ticketmaster.com
BOTTOM LINE Not a conventional musical, but it definitely flies.

less hours, we get to know the foibles and strengths, the push-pull, I-need-you/go-away hungers of distinct individuals who let their bodies do the talking.

And what bodies these are. The men are tough but vulnerable. The women are aware of their power. Tharp uses all kinds of contradictory attitudes, acknowledging how many different thoughts and feelings people are capable of experiencing at the same time.

Fewer and fewer clothes are worn as the evening progresses, suggesting the club has a back room where even more intimacies are enjoyed. Couplings are seldom what matchmakers would choose. Holley Farmer, all predatory cool, spends much of the night with the street-wise magnificence of John

Selya, who has an emotional power that transcends the fiendish steps.

The biggest show-off, Karine Plantadit, is with the introspective Keith Roberts. She plays too much to the audience, but her lethal legs excuse a lot. Matthew Stockwell Dibble, the most elegantly balletic, ends up with the witty Rika Okamoto. When innocent Laura Mead and the astoundingly acrobatic and seamless Charlie Neshyba-Hodges decide "Let's Fall in Love," they do fall.

Tharp, who has made several Sinatra ballets, clearly went out of her way to avoid repeating herself. I would have liked a few more greatest-hits mixed in with the 30 songs — Sinatra's voice accompanied with the live (wonderful but overamplified) orchestra. I also would have preferred a few less hard-driven emotions and more languid ones. As Frank says, well, that's life — and it's all right with me.

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 "Come Fly Away"



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Karine Plantadit and Keith Roberts in "Come Fly Away," a musical choreographed and directed by Twyla Tharp